

EDUCATION

Hints On Child Training

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As a rule the training power of the parent is sadly undervalued. Following a recent murder in our small village, I discovered that one of the three young people involved was a local Sotho boy well known in the community. Many people had spent time and effort to try and empower him as a person. Despite this boy having excellent communication skills and showing promise as a leader he remained homeless - sadly he would not submit to any authority. The horrific event made me wonder how a boy with so much potential could choose to take part in the brutal murder of an innocent, elderly man that trusted his murderers. I recall how this young man slept outside the old gentleman's home on many nights, and how he learnt to negotiate for his own basic needs from a young age. My impression, perhaps hope would be more accurate, was that this young boy would grow up to become a lawyer and would be found advocating for the poor. Unfortunately those hopes are temporarily dashed as he is now in prison.

This incident prompted me to share with you some hints that I learnt from H. Clay Trumbull's book, *Hints on Child Training*. More than ever before we need to invest in parent training since most parents do not realise the negative spiral that their lack of training has on the moral climate of society.

Child training begins at birth and continues for as long as a child is a child - in this way child training covers every phase of a child's action and attitude in life. Child training does not change a child's nature, but it does change his way of giving expression to his individual nature. Child training does not endow a child with entirely new character traits, but it does facilitate the control or tempering of certain characteristics, and to the manifestation and positive growth of others. At the end of a growth or maturing process it might appear as if the character is totally different from the original, and sometimes it may even seem as if a "new child" has replaced the "old". Child training in essence is the guiding, monitoring and shaping of a child's feelings, thoughts, words and action in every sphere of life, from birth to the end of childhood.

Too many parents assume that their introvert or extrovert child must remain so for life. While some

children are by nature very timid and introverted some are very bold or forward; while some are very extravagant in speech and manner, others remain unwilling to express themselves. The differences in personality and character are obvious, but are not acceptable when displayed impolitely. Children can be trained to go in almost any direction. It is a parent's honour and responsibility to mould their children, with God's blessing, to be and to do what they should be and do, rather than what they would like to be and do.

"All children need restraining in some things and stimulating in others"

Take for example a boy with a high intelligence who excels in certain areas but he does as he pleases without considering other people; if his selfish attitude is not changed (trained "out" of him) he will end up being an obstacle to his own manhood. Such a boy is likely to be looked upon as one who must be



allowed to have his own way, since that way is obviously not a bad way, and he shows uncommon power in this way. So that boy may be left untrained in this specific area until he is miserably past training, merely because his main fault is unrecognized by those who could correct it, and who would gladly do so if they saw it in its due proportions. Unfortunately this was precisely what happened with the young man in our community who now stands accused of murder - he was not sufficiently restrained in the areas that ultimately caused him to stumble.

"Careful study and a clever judgement are needed on a parent's part to determine a child's unusual faults. Each parent would do well to ask himself, 'what are the special

faults of my child? Where is he weakest? In what direction is his greatest strength liable to lead him astray, and when is it likely to fail him? Which of his faults is most prominent? Which of them is of chief importance for immediate correction?"

We should not despise the unfriendly criticisms or kind suggestions of family or friends. Seldom is a parent so astute that he can know his children through and through, and be able to weigh the behaviours of a child. Children displaying similar characteristics to their parents, where as a result of the parents being unable to identify the fault within them fail to recognise or correct the same fault in their children, often confront me. The real question remains as to why parents do not pay attention to proper training? The short answer to this complicated question is that in many instances they are afraid of breaking the will of their child.

"The right or the wrong use of willpower is the right or the wrong exercise of an individual's truest personality. Hence the careful guarding and wise guiding of a child's will should be counted among the foremost duties of one who is responsible for a child's training."

Trumbull further suggests that will training is an imperative component, whereas will breaking has no part or place in the training of a child. A child with a broken will is less equipped for the struggles of life as opposed to a child with only one arm, one leg, or one eye. A broken-willed child is left powerless to achieve in real life, and principally because without a strong will there is a weak personality. Simply put, to break a child's will is to crush his will, and in the process also destroy the child's pleasure of free choice - it is to force him to an action against his choice, instead of persuading him to choose the better option when given the opportunity.

Hints on Child Training is available for R75 from
sales@oikosfamily.co.za

Dynamis helps families to recognise the individual gifting of their children that sometimes need to be stimulated and sometimes restrained for the sake of the child becoming what God has for him of her.

